

Learning English with CBC Calgary

Weekly newscast

January 18th 2012

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Objectives of the weekly newscast lesson

- to develop listening skills at the CLB 4 level
- to increase vocabulary among learners
- to increase knowledge of news stories
- to provide a self-study tool, as well as, an ESL classroom resource



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<http://www.cbc.ca/calgary/learning-english/>

News story #1

Before you listen to the first news story, complete this vocabulary activity. It will help you to understand the listening more easily.

Vocabulary

Match the words with their definitions. *Answers are in the appendix.*

Answer	Word	Definition
	1. rescue	a) to start or to begin a plan or project
	2. hostage	b) to express that something is wrong or bad
	3. vary	c) to save someone from something
	4. estimate	d) factory
	5. launch	e) to be different
	6. attempt	f) to guess how much or how many
	7. foreign	g) to get away from someone that traps you
	8. criticize	h) from a different country, place
	9. escape	i) a person taken and held against their will for some purpose
	10. plant	j) to try to do something

Extra definitions to help you understand the reading:

Special Forces – US army trained in fighting abroad in difficult or unusual situations

Operation – a planned set of steps to achieve a difficult goal

Militants – aggressive people well trained for war

Now listen to the first news story from the audio file.

Listening activity: Multiple Choice

Choose the best answer to complete the sentences. *Answers are in the appendix.*

1. Algerian Special Forces launched a _____ on Thursday at a natural gas plant.	a) rescue operation b) militant attack
2. The Special Forces freed _____ who were being held by al-Qaida militants.	a) natural gas workers b) foreign hostages
3. Militants had attacked the plant and taken hostages because _____	a) the workers were foreigners. b) France had sent soldiers to Mali.
4. Algerian state TV said _____ hostages had died, but the militants said _____ had died.	a) 4 / 35 b) 35 / 4
5. Some foreign governments _____ the Special Forces operation.	a) criticized b) celebrated
6. The Algerian government feared the militants would _____ if they didn't rescue the workers.	a) kill the hostages b) escape

Discussion Question

Al-Qaida is a militant Islamic group that has attacked people and military targets around the world. What do you think governments can or should do to protect people from this group? What role should foreign militaries take in Algeria?

News story #2

Before you listen to the second news story, complete this vocabulary activity. It will help you to understand the listening more easily.

Vocabulary

Use the vocabulary words below to complete the sentences. *Answers are in the appendix.*

mass (large amount)	reduce (decrease)	violence (unwanted force)
ban (to not allow)	reject (not accept)	executive (power of government)
abide (accept/follow)	proposals (suggestions)	acknowledge (admit; say publicly)

Extra definitions to help you understand the reading:

assault weapon - guns similar to military guns

high-capacity ammunition magazines – a detachable part of a gun that holds many bullets

congressional - having to do with congress, part of the US government

1. We want to reduce the amount of crime in our city.
2. There was a _____ shooting, killing 20 students, last month at a school in Connecticut.
3. Weapons are _____ from schools.
4. _____ is not tolerated/allowed in schools.
5. Students who do not _____ by the rules will be punished.
6. The government _____ there are environmental problems that need to be solved.
7. Scientists and citizens have given the government many _____ to protect the environment.
8. Many of the suggestions have been _____ because they are too expensive to do.
9. The Prime Minister had to make an _____ decision about the military operation.

Now listen to the second news story from the audio file.

Listening Activity: Short Answer

Read and answer the questions below. *Answers are in the appendix.*

1. Why does President Obama want to make changes?
2. How many people died in Connecticut one month ago?
3. What could the changes President Obama suggests lead to (result in)?
4. How many executive actions did President Obama sign?
5. Who does the NRA say will be affected by the proposals?
6. What does the U.S. rank number one in?

Discussion Question

Gun control is an issue in Canada. Do you think citizens have the right to own a gun? Should they be required to register this gun? What control should the government have?

News story #3

Before you listen to the third news story, complete this vocabulary activity. It will help you to understand the listening more easily.

Vocabulary - Read the definitions below, and then put the words in the sentences in the correct order. *Answers are in the appendix.*

Words and Definitions
landline – a telephone that is not a cell phone
currently – happening now
providing – giving or supplying something
generate – to cause or lead to something
spread – to share or give out

1. because we We have don't need a cell phones. landline

2. currently She is working studying. and

3. teacher the textbooks class. for the is Our providing

4. fan in does not The our car generate heat much

5. new books The were spread the 12 classes. across

Now listen to the third news story from the audio file.

Listening Activity: True/False

Decide whether the statements below are **true** or **false**. Write your answer in the blanks. *Answers are in the appendix.*

1. ____ Currently cell phone users do not pay for 911 service.

2. ____ Landline users pay 70% of the cost of 911.

3. ____ The fee for the 911 service will be 44 cents per week.

4. ____ The new fees will lead to \$16 million for the Government.

5. ____ This new money will be given to the call centres in Edmonton and Calgary.

Discussion Question

Do you have both a cell phone and landline? Have you ever had to call 911 in Canada? Why do you think cell phone users are making most of the 911 calls?

Language Focus

Identifying verb tenses and their use

Past simple – we use the past simple when we are discussing events that occurred in the past, and no longer exist or are not happening now.

Past perfect – The past perfect is used to show the order of events in the past. We use the past perfect to show an event occurred before a certain time in the past.

Let's look at how these are used in the story.

“Algerian Special Forces **launched** a rescue operation Thursday at a natural gas plant in the Sahara Desert.” “Militants **had attacked** the natural gas plant on Wednesday taking dozens of foreign workers hostage.”

Both events occurred in the past. The Militants attacked the natural gas plant one day before the Special Forces launched the rescue operation, so the author used the past perfect in the second sentence.

Forming the past perfect: had + past participle

Let's look at some more examples from the first story. Can you identify the simple past verbs and the past perfect verb in each sentence? *Answers are in the appendix.*

1. “The militants said they took the hostages because France had sent soldiers to Mali earlier in the week.”
2. “Algerian state television said Thursday that four hostages, two Britons and two Filipinos, had died.”
3. “But the militants said at least 35 hostages had died during the rescue attempt.”

Transcripts of Weekly news stories

	JANUARY 18 TH WEEKLY NEWS STORIES	TIME
Introduction	Hi, this is Nadia Stewart. You're listening to Learning English with CBC for January 18th.	0:00
Story 1	Algerian Special Forces launched a rescue operation Thursday at a natural gas plant in the Sahara Desert. The Special Forces freed foreign hostages who were being held by al-Qaida militants. However, estimates for the number of dead varied from four to dozens. Militants had attacked the natural gas plant on Wednesday taking dozens of foreign workers hostage. The militants said they took the hostages because France had sent soldiers to Mali earlier in the week. Algerian state television said Thursday that four hostages, two Britons and two Filipinos, had died. But the militants said at least 35 hostages had died during the rescue attempt. Some foreign governments have criticized the Special Forces operation but the Algerian government said it had to try to rescue the hostages because they feared the militants were going to try to escape.	0:08
Story 2	President Barack Obama has begun to make changes in order to reduce gun violence in the U.S. One month after a mass shooting in a Connecticut elementary school in which 20 children were killed, Obama announced changes that could lead to a ban on military-style assault weapons and high-capacity ammunition magazines. Obama signed 23 executive actions, which do not require congressional approval. But the president acknowledged the most important actions must be taken by Congress. The National Rifle Association is rejecting Obama's proposals. The N-R-A says "only honest law-abiding gun owners will be affected" by the proposals, adding American children will not be safer. The U.S. has the highest rate of gun ownership of any country in the world.	01:06
Story 3	Alberta cell phone users will soon pay 44-cents a month for 9-1-1 services. Landline users currently pay that fee. But the provincial government says 70 % of 9-1-1 calls come from cell phone users so they will now help cover the costs of providing the service. Municipal Affairs Minister Doug Griffiths says all phone users will pay the same monthly fee starting in the spring. He also says the new fees will generate 16-million dollars a year for the province. The money will be spread across the 24 call centres that provide 9-1-1 services.	02:00

Answer keys

News story 1

Vocabulary

Answer	Word	Definition
c	1. rescue	a) to start or to begin a plan or project
i	2. hostage	b) to express that something is wrong or bad
e	3. vary	c) to save someone from something
f	4. estimate	d) factory
a	5. launch	e) to be different
j	6. attempt	f) to guess how much or how many
h	7. foreign	g) to get away from someone that traps you
b	8. criticize	h) from a different country, place
g	9. escape	i) a person taken and held against their will for some purpose
d	10. plant	j) to try to do something

Listening

1. Algerian Special Forces launched a _____ on Thursday at a natural gas plant.	a) rescue operation b) militant attack
2. The Special Forces freed _____ who were being held by al-Qaida militants.	a) natural gas workers b) foreign hostages
3. Militants attacked the plant and took hostages because _____	a) the workers were foreigners. b) France had sent soldiers to Mali.
4. Algerian state TV said _____ hostages had died, but the militants said _____ had died.	a) 4 / 35 b) 35 / 4
5. Some foreign governments _____ the Special Forces operation.	a) criticized b) celebrated
6. The Algerian government feared the militants would _____ if they didn't rescue the workers.	a) kill the hostages b) escape

News story 2

Vocabulary

1. We want to reduce the amount of crime in our city.
2. There was a mass shooting last month at a school in Connecticut.
3. Weapons are banned from schools.
4. Violence is not tolerated/allowed in schools.
5. Students who do not abide by the rules will be punished.
6. The government acknowledges there are environmental problems that need to be solved.
7. Scientists and citizens have given the government many proposals to protect the environment.
8. Many of the suggestions have been rejected because they are too expensive to do.
9. The Prime Minister had to make an executive decision about the military operation.

Listening

1. Why does President Obama want to make changes? *President Obama wants to make changes to reduce gun violence in the US.*
2. How many people died in Connecticut one month ago? *20 children were killed in the mass shooting at a school in Connecticut last month.*
3. What could the changes Obama suggests lead to? *The changes could lead to a ban on military-style assault weapons and high-capacity ammunition magazines.*
4. How many executive actions did Obama sign? *He signed 23 executive actions.*
5. Who does the NRA say will be affected by the proposals? *They say honest law-abiding gun owners will be affected.*
6. What does the U.S. rank number one in? *The U.S. has the highest rate of gun ownership of any country in the world.*

News story #3 - vocabulary

1. because we We have don't need a cell phones. landline
We don't need a landline because we have cell phones.
2. currently She is working studying. and
She is currently working and studying.
3. teacher the textbooks class. for the is Our providing
Our teacher is providing the textbooks for the class.
4. fan in does not The our car generate heat much
The fan in our car does not generate much heat.
5. new books The were spread the 12 classes. across
The new books were spread across the 12 classes.

Listening

1. T Currently cell phone users do not pay for 911 service.
2. F Landline users pay 70% of the cost of 911.
3. F The fee for the 911 service will be 44 cents per week.
4. T The new fees will lead to \$16 million for the Government.
5. F This new money will be given to the call centres in Edmonton and Calgary.

Language focus

1. "The militants said they **took** the hostages because France **had sent** soldiers to Mali earlier in the week." *First France sent soldiers to Mali, then the militants took the hostages.*
2. "Algerian state television **said** Thursday that four hostages, two Britons and two Filipinos, **had died**."
3. "But the militants **said** at least 35 hostages had **died** during the rescue attempt."